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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000196

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD DISTANCES ITSELF FROM TALK OF PARALLEL GOVERNMENT

REF: RANGOON 185

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: The NLD hosted a commemoration of Union Day on February 12, but deferred to ethnic political parties to chair the event and deliver speeches. Representatives of the SNLD, whose leaders were arrested just two days prior to Union Day, were absent, although several hundred pro-democracy political party members and supporters attended, as did a dozen diplomats. NLD leaders, in a private meeting with the COM prior to the commemorative event, distanced themselves from reports of exile group(s) who plan to form a parallel government inside Burma and subsequently issued a statement announcing that such a plan is not the policy of the NLD. End Summary.

12. (U) The National League for Democracy (NLD) on February 12 led pro-democracy political parties in a quiet and subdued commemoration of Burma's 58th Union Day (marking the 1947 signing of the Panlong Agreement, which unified the country's major ethnic groups and led to independence). Although the NLD hosted the event at its Rangoon headquarters, the party deferred to Burma's ethnic minority democracy parties to chair the proceedings and deliver several speeches. COM and P/E chief were in attendance, as were several hundred party members and supporters; representatives from the Australian, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian (Bangkok), and UK missions; and the UN resident coordinator.

13. (SBU) Conspicuously absent from the opposition commemoration were representatives of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD). GOB authorities had, just days prior, arrested SNLD leaders and prohibited the leading pro-democracy ethnic political coalition (the United Nationalities Alliance-UNA, dominated by the SNLD) from hosting a Union Day event (ref A). The GOB had a considerable security presence at the NLD office, with dozens of "undercover" Special Branch officers photographing and monitoring the proceedings. In lieu of a planned keynote speech by SNLD chairman Hkun Htun Oo, detained by the GOB since February 9, remarks were delivered by leaders of ethnic Chin (Zomi), Karen, and Arakan political parties.

14. (U) The Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) issued a five-page statement, distributed by the NLD, that chastised the SPDC for broken promises and called for negotiations among leaders of the regime, the NLD, and the ethnic nationalities. The CRPP also criticized the SPDC for its exclusive National Convention, concluding that "it is hard to believe" the process could produce a constitution that will guarantee democracy and human rights. The CRPP also advised cease-fire groups "to evaluate seriously" how they hope to achieve their own political and national objectives through such a flawed process.

15. (C) Prior to the Union Day event, the COM met with NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe and Secretary U Lwin to inquire about rumors (both local and international) that exile group(s) were planning to form a parallel government inside Burma, allegedly with the endorsement of Aung San Suu Kyi. U Aung Shwe categorically denied that the NLD supported such a plan and said party leaders had not even heard about any related discussions. "The formation of a parallel government runs counter to our policy and would be dangerous for those of us inside the country," said U Aung Shwe, "we don't even accept the NCGUB (government-in-exile)." U Lwin noted that ASSK had opposed former Prime Minister U Nu's ill-fated efforts in 1988 to claim legitimate control of the government, 26 years after losing power to a military coup.

16. (U) Following the Union Day commemoration, the NLD Central Executive Committee convened a scheduled meeting of district party leaders and subsequently issued a brief statement on the evening of February 12 that read: "We have heard reports about the formation of a parallel government. We hereby announce that forming such a government is not the policy of the National League for Democracy." Martinez